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SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE THE

PRESIDENT, GOVERNORS, &c.

IN THE CHAPEL OF THE

MAGDALEN HOSPITAL,

ST. GEORGE'S FIELDS,

ON

THURSDAY, APRIL the 29th, 1773,

By JOHN CLARKE HUBBARD, M. A.

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MDCCLXXIII.

MAGDALEN HOSPITAL, St. GEORGE's FIELDS,

29th of April, 1773.

At a SPECIAL GENERAL COURT.

RESOLVED,

THAT the Thanks of this Court be preſented to the Reverend Mr. JOHN CLARKE HUBBARD for his excellent Sermon preached this Day before the Right Honourable the Earl of HERTFORD, the Preſident, the Vice-Preſidents, Treaſurer, and Governors of this Hoſpital; and that he be requeſted to cauſe the ſame to be printed and publiſhed.

By Order of the General Court,

A. WINTERBOTTOM, Secretary.

LUKE xv. 10.

Likewiſe I ſay unto you, there is joy in the preſence of the Angels of God over one ſinner that repenteth.

THAT we are eminently diſtinguiſhed by the divine favour, and the peculiar objects of our Creator's care, the œconomy of our redemption clearly and indiſputably aſcertains; that ſtupendous work of love and mercy, which his wiſdom plann'd, and his goodneſs compleated. Nor can we doubt, that our intereſt is leſs dear to that exalted Being, who is ſtiled the Brightneſs of his Father's Glory, when we call to mind his voluntary reſignation of a life, devoted to our ſervice, and his patiently ſubmitting to the ſhame and torture of the croſs, for us men, and for our ſalvation.

The earneſtneſs, he ever ſhewed, in explaining the nature and conſequences of diſobedience, and by what ſteps we might riſe from a ſtate of ſlavery to the glorious liberty of the ſons of God, carries with it an inconteſtible evidence that he was concerned for our happineſs with unalterable affection; and all his frequent admonitions, all his repeated promiſes and inſtructions, were dictated by the ſame tender motives, and directed to the ſame gracious purpoſe.

True and ſincere repentance was the ſubſtance of his religion, and to fix that ſubſtance on a ſecure and laſting baſis, was the final purport of his heavenly miſſion.

His revelation was calculated to eradicate the apprehenſions, and improve thoſe effuſions of regretful ſorrow, which naturally ſpring from an alarmed and guilty conſcience; but till that revelation was more generally aſſented to and eſtabliſhed, he foreſaw, that a finite and unenlightened creature, ſinking under the weight of ſin, would either dread the fury, or at leaſt, doubt the placability, of infinite offended juſtice, and that this diſpoſition, probably, would render

render his ſorrow vain and ineffectual, and rather drive him to deſpair, than diſpoſe him to repentance.

To prevent therefore ſuch dangerous conſequences, our Saviour embraced every opportunity to convince his followers, that the divine juſtice, and man's forgiveneſs, were not inconſiſtent; on the contrary, that his death and merits would be accepted as an adequate atonement for the ſins of the whole world.

To confirm this aſſertion, he conſtantly repreſents the Deity of heaven in the moſt amiable and engaging light, and under the endearing character of a father, ſtudious of the happineſs, and earneſt for the welfare of his children, recommends him to our conſideration as the proper object of confidence and love; on whoſe unwearied mercy we might repoſe with ſafety, and under the ſhadow of whoſe wings we might find health and refuge; whoſe goodneſs, like the dew of heaven, falls indeed ſilent and unſeen, but, in its effects, is viſible as the noon-day ſun; and, like that ſun, is felt through nature's depths, and all creation's works.

Among

Among the many leſſons of ſublime morality, among the diverſity of admonitions and unerring counſel, which our Saviour gave his diſciples, to be recorded for our inſtruction, the parables, contained in the chapter from whence the text is borrowed, deſerve our particular conſideration and regard.

Under the alluſion of a ſheep ſtrayed from the fold, and a loſt piece of ſilver, we are taught, that the deviation of a fellow-creature from the laws of rectitude and virtue, ought to affect us with ſo ſenſible a concern, as to make us earneſt and indefatigable in our attempts to recover him; and to welcome his return with the warmeſt expreſſions of congratulation and applauſe.

But, as the laſt parable of the prodigal ſon, is by far the moſt ſtriking and affecting, and as the concluſion of this pathetic ſtory was meant, by our Saviour himſelf, to convey a diſtinct ſimilitude of the final judgment, and to repreſent the behaviour of God to ſinful and repentant man; a more particular attention to it cannot be thought impertinent, or

foreign

foreign to the preſent purpoſe, calculated in ſo eminent a degree, to ſmooth the path of penitence, and alleviate the conſuming pangs of deep, of in-bred woe.

We are told by the divine paraboliſt, that this unthinking young man, had no ſooner received the ſhare of his fortune which fell to his inheritance, than he departed to ſome diſtant country, where he ſoon diſſipated the whole in riot and extravagance. And when all was ſpent, and he had applied, in vain, to the herd of fawning ſycophants, who before, perhaps, had been maintained by his bounty, and were, in no ſmall degree, the occaſion of his preſent diſtreſs; the land, where he dwelt, was viſited with a famine; and he, being totally deſtitute and forſaken, became at length reduced to ſuch extreme neceſſity, as to feel a deſire to feed on the huſks which the ſwine did eat, while even, of theſe, no man gave unto him. Hunger, and want, and nakedneſs, ſoon brought him to a ſenſe of his errors, and forced him to reflect within himſelf, how many of his father's ſervants had bread enough, and to ſpare, while he was periſhing with hunger. I will therefore, ſays he,

return again to this once-indulgent parent; will throw myſelf at his feet, and ſay to him, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven and thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon, make me as one of thy hired ſervants.

The diſtreſs and humility of this unhappy youth, who, from having been educated with all the tenderneſs and endearments which affluence and plenty could beſtow, was reduced to the neceſſity of entreating his father no longer to look on him as his ſon, but to place him on a level with his meaneſt ſervant, exhibit ſo tender and affecting a ſcene, that we forget at once his former follies, and willingly anticipate the forgiveneſs of his father: To him, indeed, he was ſtill dear, as though he had never wandered from the paths of duty; his aged heart had felt many a pang for his abſence, and heaved with many a wiſhful ſigh for his return——ſoon therefore as he heard the welcome news of his arrival, forgetting his infirmities and years, he ran, he flew, to meet him; and preventing his ſon's premeditated apology, claſped him in his arms; and, hanging over him with paternal fondneſs, ſhed upon his

neck

neck the mingled tears of grief, ſurprize, and joy.

Such, in the opinion of this divine inſtructor, would be the behaviour of an earthly parent to a once-criminal and penitential child: and, as he himſelf obſerves, if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly father give his holy ſpirit to them that aſk him? If ye can be melted into tenderneſs and pity, if ye, though juſtly provoked by wilful and repeated miſconduct, can ſtill be reconciled to your friends or children, by the ſlighteſt acknowledgment of their errors and diſtreſs; ſhall that God, who formed us in the womb, who knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but duſt—— ſhall he be unaffected by the tears, or inexorable to the entreaties of repentant ſinners? no, their tears ſhall waſh their ſtains away, their prayers ſhall reach to heaven; flow on, ye holy tears, ye gracious ſigns of amiable remorſe! your coſtly drops will not be loſt, nor will your guſhing ſluices ſtream in vain.

One fervent wiſh, one earneſt petition for divine forgiveneſs, will arreſt the uplifted bolt, and convert the wrath of vengeance into pity and affection; he that ruleth in the heavens is not ſlow to hear, nor is the God of mercy hard to be intreated; the world may laugh to ſcorn, the giddy thoughtleſs world, may deſpiſe the ſighing of a contrite heart; but, ſo grateful to the inhabitants of heaven, is the ſacrifice of a broken ſpirit, that even the Almighty is repreſented, as accepting it, with peculiar ſatisfaction; nor is it unaffecting to thoſe glorious beings, the angels of his preſence; they welcome the returning prodigal with triumphal acclamations; then tune their golden harps to ſongs of feſtive joy, and celebrate the goodneſs of their maker by congratulating the accepted penitent.

Thus amiable and prevailing is ſincere contrition, thus gracious and condeſcending is the divine nature; however criminal and erroneous may have been the conduct of our lives, were even our offences more in number than the drops of the ocean, the hand of mercy would expunge them all. The moſt conciſe, the moſt ſimple acknowledgement, ſpringing from

from a real, and unaffected, conſciouſneſs of guilt, is, in the opinion of our bleſſed Saviour, of more intrinſic value, than all the oſtentatious parade of righteous dealing, and publick adoration. True and genuine virtue is modeſt, humble, and unaſpiring; he therefore who is over-ſolicitous to vindicate his own conduct, and repreſent it as highly commendable and meritorious, muſt be neceſſarily biaſſed by a ſtronger tendency to ſelf-juſtification, than can poſſibly be conſiſtent with the allowed infirmity of human nature. The publican in the parable, who in the humbleſt language confeſſed himſelf a ſinner, returned, more juſtified, than the aſſuming phariſee; he did not preſume even to lift up his eyes to heaven; yet, the humility of his behaviour proceeded not from any doubt of the divine goodneſs, but from an internal conviction of his own unworthineſs.

This is that proper frame of mind, that devoted reſignation and lowlineſs of ſpirit, which renders repentance acceptable and efficacious. With a heart, thus ſenſibly affected, and relying on the merits of an interceding Saviour, the moſt culpable and licentious ſinner may approach the throne,

even of unerring juſtice, with humble confidence and joy; nor need he deſpair of mercy, though his petition be delivered in as few words as the ſelf-condemning publican's, "God, be merciful to "me, a ſinner!"

Thus eaſy, on the ſide of heaven, are the terms of our acceptance; but the difficulties that occur in human life to retard and obſtruct the return to duty, are numerous and conſiderable. To eſtabliſh that calm and reſigned diſpoſition, from whence, alone, true repentance can originate, inſtruction, leiſure, and retirement, are eſſentially requiſite: an exemption, in ſome meaſure, from the cares and ſolicitudes of life, and a total ſeclusion from thoſe ſcenes of riotous diſſipation, which had before corrupted our morals, and blocked up all the avenues to a ſerious retroſpect of paſt behaviour. How abſolutely neceſſary are ſuch previous advantages, to check the intruſions of temptation, and diſpoſe the mind to juſt and devout reflection —— witneſs, ye once-unhappy females, who have now found peace and ſhelter within theſe friendly walls!

But,

But, how ſhall ye, who, born to happier, brighter days, can review the paſt without horror, and look forward with chearfulneſs and ſerenity, how ſhall ye be made ſenſible of the accumulated diſtreſs and anguiſh, which theſe poor deſerted women have undergone? Not the ſtings and reproaches of a conſcience that would not *always* ſlumber, that *ſometimes* would be heard, and hold up the dreadful mirror that reflected former peace and innocence, contraſted with preſent guilt and infamy —— Not the eternal ſeparation from friends and parents; friends, once anxious for their welfare, parents, once bleſt and happy in the contemplation of their growing virtues —— Not the hard and precarious ſubſiſtance, earned, at the expence of health and temper, by daily, hourly, attendance, to the prejudices of avarice, or the wanton caprice and humours of heedleſs prodigality——Not theſe, are all the evils, they have been driven to encounter: They have experienced the aggravated inſolence and brutality of abandoned villains, long callous to the feelings of humanity, long inſenſible to the diſtreſs of others; now, rendered more callous, more inſenſible, more brutal far, by the fumes of intoxication, or the recent diſappoint-

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ment of ſome deſperate chance; they have felt the complicated horrors of want, and cold, and hunger; the world ſhunned them as a peſtilence, the united world combined againſt them; to them no hoſpitable door was open, no houſe afforded ſhelter, no home a momentary refuge, no friendly voice ſpoke comfort to their chearleſs hearts, nor would even the hand of charity drop one poor, one wretched pittance.

Is this a time, are theſe the proper circumſtances, to diſpoſe the heart to ſerious meditation, or improve that firmneſs and recollection of mind, preparatory to ſincere repentance? The calls of hunger *will* be heard, the wants of nature *will* be ſatisfied; and to ſupply them, they muſt return, muſt plunge afreſh into the bewildering maze of vicious diſſipation, that renders all reflection, all repentance, vain.

Such muſt inevitably be the condition of thoſe unfortunate women, who having once tranſgreſſed the laws of virtue, and being deſerted by their firſt ſeducers, and abandoned by all friends and relatives,

relatives, are thrown upon the wide world, to wander up and down, forſaken and forlorn; the unpitied objects of univerſal ſcorn and inſult, the prey of ruin, the victims of deſpair.

Shocking, indeed, muſt be even this ſcene of wretchedneſs, to thoſe, who are not diveſted of all humanity: what then muſt be their feelings, if ever they contemplate the proſpect beyond it; and trace the quick gradation from one ſtate of miſery to another, the paſt, intolerably ſevere, yet ſucceeded by ſtill more cruel, ſtill more oppreſſive injuries and woes, that lay ſtrong ſiege to the diſtracted ſoul, and drive it to the laſt extremities of deſpondence? A young, weak, and helpleſs woman, thus ſtruggling with innumerable difficulties and misfortunes, is perhaps a more loſt, forlorn, and pitiable object, than can again be found in all the various ſcenes of wretchedneſs incident to human nature. Her beauty, once her ſnare, and afterward, her ſole dependance and ſupport, diſeaſe and nameleſs hardſhips have deſtroyed: and, more fatal than all the ravages of diſeaſe, the thirſt of ſorrow drains her vital blood; the pangs

of reflection and regret, the ſhades of long-departed peace, and hope, for ever haunt and agonize her mind: the dying groans of her forſaken parents, whoſe hearts her infamy and crimes have broken, ſtill murmur in her ear. Her weak and tender frame can ill ſuſtain the ſhock of *exterior* evils, much leſs, the *internal* conflict of a thouſand warring paſſions, that ſtrain and rend the heart-ſtrings —— Where is, now, the glow of health, the animated bloom of beauty, the ſong, the dance, the ſprightly air, and all the gay bewitching charms, that caught the wandering eyes of thoughtleſs men? Ah, where, indeed! The weight of age falls heavy on her, even in the morning of her life; the ſtream of health, that once vivified the roſy hue freſh bluſhing on her cheek, habitual cares, and watchings, and intemperance, have waſted and deſtroyed: and nothing now remains of her former ſelf, but the ſad remembrance that ſhe once was happy; a pale dejected look, a lifeleſs unanimated mien, and a heart, juſt expiring, beneath the burden of unutterable woes.

And can this faded drooping form, this dying look, this ſad deſponding air, can theſe allure the eye, or fan the flame of looſe erratic paſſion? Alas, the herd of wretches, on whoſe capricious taſte her daily bread depends, deſpiſe and loath her; and from their taunts, their ſcorns, and more than brutal wrongs, ſhe crawls to ſome neglected hole, or corner, and, like the canker-eaten flower, that withers in its bloom, ſinks to the cold earth, famiſhed, ſpiritleſs, and broken-hearted; and ſoon reſigns to death, a body worn out with wretchedneſs, and to immortality, a hopeleſs and deſpairing ſoul.

Much, on this melancholly ſubject, has been already ſpoken, much already written, by abler pens, and tongues more eloquent than mine; yet let me hope, that even from this imperfect ſketch, ye may conceive, in ſome degree, what are the objects, and what their diſtreſſes, which this moſt excellent inſtitution is calculated to relieve. The generous Britons, famed for their humanity through every age and country, could not ſee a fellow-creature;

creature, and that a poor defenceleſs woman, thus drooping, ſinking, waſting with exceſs of miſery, and not feel their manly hearts relent, and not reſcue her from preſent and eternal ruin, and with all the tenderneſs of pity ſoothe the dying mourner! For her, theſe hoſpitable walls were raiſed; here, the poor ſufferer may throw her burden down, and find at laſt a place to lay her head: here, the united malice of fortune and the world is counter-acted; here, no ſeverities are known; no keen reproaches wring her ſoul, no taunts or inſults ſhock her ear; but, in their ſtead, is introduced every tender application, every ſoftening lenitive, that human ſkill, or human pity, can deviſe, to repair the waſte and ravages of affliction, and heal a wounded heart.

Nor let me wrong your feelings, by even ſuppoſing, that your hearts do not ſympathize with theſe daughters of affliction, whom the generoſity of their country has reſtored to life, to peace, to happineſs. Yet, at the ſame time, permit me to obſerve, that the women, to whom the governors of this charity are not capacitated to extend

its

its influence, are more numerous, and more miſerable, than the time will ſuffer me to explain. To ſolicit your preſent contributions would be needleſs, your appearance here ſpeaks your intention —— but I would wiſh to recommend this charity in a more extenſive ſenſe, and make its influence general as the goodneſs, and expanſive as the hearts of its *annual* ſupporters.

That the petitioners for its protection can plead *complicated* diſtreſs, never will be doubted; but they can plead more, they can plead *unparalleled* diſtreſs; ſuch, as can find no reſource upon the face of the earth to fly to, no heart, ready to commiſerate, no ear, that will even liſten to its tale: and ſuch, as the Magdalen, alone, is willing to alleviate.

And it may not be improper to obſerve, that ye, who contribute to the relief of theſe poor unfortunate creatures, do more for them, than even their neareſt relations or friends; they probably, have long forſaken them, have long given them up to all the malice of their deſtiny, and all the miſe-

ries of a loſt and hopeleſs ſtate: while ye, to whom they are total ſtrangers, whoſe hearts, their infant innocence never ſoftened, or growing beauty charmed, can pity their forlorn condition, and unite to ſhield them from deſtruction with greater zeal, than even parental fondneſs can inſpire.

This is a circumſtance which will exaggerate your benevolence, and draw down additional bleſſings from above: there is every reaſon, in the nature of things to believe, that our relatives and deſcendants will ever be exempted from a participation of thoſe misfortunes, which our compaſſion and liberality have conſpired to extenuate; as therefore your bounty will ſave the weakeſt, and moſt deſerted part of your ſpecies, from temporal perdition, this, among others, may be your temporal compenſation: and, to be ſheltered by an all-powerful hand from the rude blaſt of ſuch diſaſters, to which the higheſt and the loweſt ſtations are equally expoſed, is not the *leaſt* deſirable event, that can befal a human being.

But,

But, ye will do more than this; ye will be conducive to their *eternal* welfare; your generoſity will give them leiſure and ability to repent, and ſhape their way to heaven. And for ſuch conduct this world has not a *ſufficient* recompence: to ſave a ſoul, is to act in imitation of God himſelf; and for ſuch ſuperior and tranſcendant virtue, nothing, but an endleſs communion with God, and godlike beings, will be deemed a juſt, or adequate reward.

HYMN

HYMN for the MAGDALENS.

Written by Mr. HUBBARD.

O GOD of Mercy! hear my pray'r,
Thy weak, thy ſinful creature ſave;
Thy voice can raiſe me from deſpair,
Can raiſe, triumphant, from the grave!

In Vanity's bewildering maze,
How long my erring feet have ſtray'd!
Far from Religion's peaceful ways,
And far from Virtue's guardian aid!

O Lord of life! O Son Divine!
Almighty Saviour! Heavenly Friend!
To me, thy pitying ear incline,
Thy renovating grace extend!

Tho' thus polluted and forlorn,
By thee inſpir'd, my ſoul ſhall riſe,
Fairer, than fleeces newly ſhorn,
Than mountain ſnows, or vernal ſkies.

Then, let thy Spirit, from above,
My Saviour, God! deſcend on me;
Correct my thoughts, my faith improve,
And make me worthy heaven and thee!

So, ſhall my trembling ſoul aſpire
To reach thy ſacred bleſt abode,
To join the bright ethereal choir,
And hymn with them the Eternal God!

FINIS.